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USDA AWARDS \$ 4 MILLION IN RURAL TRANSPORTATION GRANTS FOR THE SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, Dec.13, 2005 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture today awarded multi-year grant funds to Mississippi, New York, Oregon, Texas and West Virginia for innovative approaches in overcoming limited transportation resources in rural areas for the Summer Food Service Program. Over the course of 3 years, \$4 million will be made available to these states.

“The Summer Food Service Program provides free, nutritious meals and snacks to children in low-income areas during summer vacations when they do not have access to school lunch or breakfast,” said Deputy Secretary Chuck Conner. “Hunger doesn’t take a summer vacation, yet of the 16 million children that utilize free and reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program, only three million of these children have access to these same meals during the summer months. These grants are designed to increase access to our Summer Food Service Program.”

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 authorized USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service to provide grants to no more than five states for innovative approaches to overcome limited transportation resources in rural areas.

“Ensuring that all eligible individuals, families and especially our children have access to the nutrition assistance they need is a high priority for the Bush Administration,” said Conner. “In all, we estimate that, as a result of these grants, as many as 18,000 children will be served at more than 265 rural sites during the summer of 2006.”

A total of 18 school districts and 12 community-based organizations across the five states will provide transportation services as part of their Summer Food Service Programs. Several of the organizations will use the funding to provide transportation to children at existing meal sites while others will transport food to new meal sites in remote rural areas.

USDA is committed to improving access to the Summer Food Service Program for children in needy areas. Participation is especially critical in rural areas where the lack of transportation resources can be a significant obstacle that prevents participation.

USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service administers 15 nutrition assistance programs including the Summer Food Service Program, the Food Stamp Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, the Emergency Food Assistance Program and the National School Lunch Program. Together these programs make up the federal nutrition safety net. USDA administers these

programs in partnership with state and local agencies and works with faith and community-based organizations to ensure that nutrition assistance is available to those in need. Additional information about the Summer Food Service Program can be found at www.fns.usda.gov

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